

CONFERENCE *connection*

Alabama • Georgia • Mississippi
South Carolina • Tennessee • NW Florida



SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

November 1, 2016

From the Conference Office

June's Jottings

Prepare Ye the Way!

The season of Advent will be an interesting time in the Conference office. It will be a season of preparing for a new way of being present to the ministries of the Southeast Conference. The Office and the Board will be in frequent communication with you as the next couple of months unfold.



First, please make note that our mailing address is now Southeast Conference United Church of Christ, Post Office Box 1950, Decatur, GA 30031-1950. There will be a mailing in the next week to every church and postings on the website and Facebook.

My designated term ends February 28, 2017. The Southeast Conference Board of Directors has an interim search committee that is doing their work in identifying an interim. The Board, in doing planning for the 2017 budget, has approved moving to a virtual office by the end of the year when our lease at First Congregational in Atlanta expires. Making sure this concept of virtual office is in place prior to talking with interim candidates is obviously very important as they will need to plan for an office in their home or some other arrangement. I will be setting up a home office in the next couple of months.

Our accounting firm, Revolution Financial Services, has been working with us over the past year to set up administrative systems to handle paying our bills, doing payroll, and receiving your contributions. They will have access to the post office box and we have worked out a system so that all non-financial related correspondence gets to the "office."

We are also in the process of a digital file conversion project in which we are converting paper files to digital files to be stored in the cloud with multiple levels of access so that those leaders and volunteers who do the work of the Conference can have access to the documents they need whether it be Board documents, church files, minister files, or Commission on Ministry paperwork. We will be combining these files with the historical files that were digitally converted before Tim Downs retired. That will provide a complete filing system for the life of the Conference and allow access so that our geographically

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Coming Events

SEC Staff Meeting

Wed, Nov 2, 2016
Conference Office

Commission on Ministry Meeting

Sat, Nov 5, 2016, 10a
Pilgrim UCC,
Chattanooga, TN

Ecclesiastical Council

Sat, Nov 5, 2016; 3:00p

dispersed leaders can all work easily with the information they need to do the ministries of the Conference.

This all may seem strange to people who have always identified the Conference office in a physical location. The fact of the matter is that the Board and many committees have been meeting in a web based on-line meeting model for two years now. It is a shift but it does work well. In a previous Conference ministry position, I was considered deployed staff. I had to learn how to set up meetings in local church space or at a coffee shop or over a meal. And staff will continue to meet regularly to make sure that they are serving the Conference in the best possible manner and communicating clearly with one another and all of you. Good ministry can happen without a physical address.

This will indeed be a season of preparation for a new way of living into the call we have to serve all God's children through the example of the one who had no place to lay his head.



Prayer Requests

- We hold the coastal communities of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina in prayer as they continue to recover from recent weather events. We are grateful that neither **Circular Congregational Church** in Charleston or **First Congregational in Savannah** suffered any damage.
- For the community gathered at **Standing Rock, North Dakota** on November 3 including a number of UCC pastors and Conference Ministers as they stand in solidarity with the Native American community as water protectors.
- Prayers for **all those seeking political office** and all those who will and will not go to the polls on November 8. May the wisdom of the Almighty be present in times of decision making and with leaders and those whom they serve.

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2016. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers. [Click here to download the entire 2016 prayer list.](#)

Week of October 30:

- Howard Congregational UCC - Nashville, TN
- Bryan Currie
- Sarah Kim
- Patricia Robbennolt
- J. Houston Wheeler

Week of November 6:

- Covenant Community Church - Center Point, Alabama
- Edward Dahmer

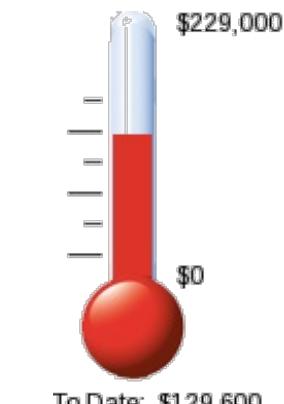
*Pilgrim UCC,
Chattanooga, TN*

Bill and Jan Bourdon's Retirement Celebration
November 12, 2016
Blowing Rock Conference Center

Authorizing Ministry in the 21st Century
Nov 30 - Dec 3, 2016
San Antonio, TX

Board of Directors
December 6, 2016

OCWM Giving



Our Church's Wider Mission provides for programs, resources, and tools to keep our churches strong, effective, and growing. We're currently at 57% of our goal!

Conference Staff

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- Amber Kirkendoll
- Alan Brett Roof
- Brynn White

Week of November 13:

- Pilgrimage UCC - Marietta, Georgia
- Susannah Davis
- Nelson Kittle
- Benjamin Rose
- Linda White

Conference Transitions

- The Southeast Conference Board of Directors has appointed an **interim search committee** who has begun its work with the assistance of Lee Albertson on the national UCC staff. The interim search committee is chaired by Rebecca Seldomridge, chair of the SEC personnel committee. Members are: Glenna Shepherd and Vanessa Robbs from Tennessee and Heath Battles from Alabama. Interviews for the Georgia representative are still ongoing.
- Prayers for **Emmanuel UCC** in Greenville, South Carolina and **Rehoboth Fellowship** of Atlanta as they are recommended to the Commission on Ministry at their November 5th meeting to move from new church start to churches with full standing.
- The Commission on Ministry has set an **ecclesiastical council** on Saturday, November 5 for Kate Stulce (and, we hope, another Member in Discernment who is close to ready). The ecclesiastical council will be held at Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Chattanooga, Tennessee, beginning at 3:00 p.m. The ecclesiastical council will immediately follow the meeting of the Commission on Ministry, scheduled to take place that day (beginning at 10:00 a.m.) at the same location. You are invited and encouraged to participate, if possible.

Churches in Transition

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee; Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville Tennessee.

Third Quarter Giving Reports Distributed

All churches and individuals should have received their third quarter giving report by now. We are grateful for the generosity of the churches and individuals who support the ministry of the Southeast Conference. Please let the office know if there are any discrepancies in your giving report. [Learn more.](#)

News from Around the Conference

Three Congregations Receive New Pastors

The Southeast Conference is pleased to announce that three of our local churches have called new pastors to their congregations within the past few weeks. Jennifer Sanders has been called to Beloved Community Church in Birmingham, Paul Hackett to Church of the Savior UCC in Alpharetta GA, and Claudia Aguilar Rubalcava to Virginia Highland Church in Atlanta. [Read more on our website.](#)

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Connect with Us!



The Wonder of Creation

by Rev. Bruce Schoup; Peace Church, UCC; Clemson, SC

You've heard it, maybe even have said it; "The place I most experience God is in nature." We know this to be true and yet almost everything we do as church has nothing to do with the out of doors and when we do something out of doors it is an activity that rarely attempts to be intentional in its intersecting with the sacred. At Peace Church we decided to do something about this and create spiritual experiences that included the out of doors. We have been calling these experiences 2nd Sundays. [Read more about this program funded by a Southeast Conference grant.](#)

Blowing Rock Conference Center Board

The Blowing Rock Conference Center Board of Directors is looking for a potential board member to represent the Southeast Conference for a 2017-2020 term. There are four meetings a year. The board has 8 to 12 members. Mary and Bill Ruth from Pleasant Hill, TN have served in this capacity during 2010-2016 and are rotating off the Board of Directors at BRCC. Please contact Mary Ruth for more details.

Alternative Gift Market at Central UCC

Give gifts that give back! Your Christmas shopping can begin at the Alternative Gift Market on November 20, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm, in the commons area at Central UCC in Atlanta. Choose gifts that give back - within our church, locally, and globally! Gifts for sale will include Christmas decorations, jewelry, hand-painted glassware, scarves and baskets. In addition, through Church World Service, you can sponsor gifts such as: water filtration systems, gardening supplies, disaster relief supplies, refugee support, educational toys, and more. There will be multiple organizations benefiting. Come enjoy refreshments and buy "gifts for good!" Contact Paula Emde: agm@central-ucc.org.

News from the United Church of Christ

Voting Faithfully

Election Day is drawing near. Here are resources prepared collaboratively for use by the UCC, the Episcopal Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America so that we might bring our faith to our civic duty. Please use and share.

http://www.uccfiles.com/VoteFaithfully_Toolkit.pdf
<http://www.uccfiles.com/rtf/Seeds-for-Election-Season-Prayers.rtf>
<http://www.uccfiles.com/rtf/Prayers-to-Help-Counter-Fear.rtf>

UCC Refines Vision and Purpose Statement

A vision of a just world for all people will guide and shape the future work of the United Church of Christ. It's a vision that the denomination's General Minister and President and unified Board of Directors are prepared to own as part of a refreshed set of Purpose, Mission and Vision statements. The UCC purpose statement comes from the Gospel of Matthew: "To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves." The mission statement is "United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all." The vision is "United in Christ's love, a just world for all." [Learn more on the UCC website.](#)

Higher Education Sunday

The last Sunday in October is typically set aside as UCC Higher Education Sunday. The Southeast Conference is privileged to have relationships with Piedmont College out of our Congregational Christian heritage and Fisk University, Talledega College, and Tougaloo College out of our American Missionary Association history. Many of our Southeast Conference members are graduates of these fine institutions who have educated and trained leaders for church and society. Let us be grateful for the commitment of our UCC predecessor bodies to education as a social justice value.

UCC Health and Dental Benefits for 2017

The Pension Boards have announced that the 2017 UCC Medical and Dental Benefits Plans will both experience small increases in rates. The Non-Medicare and Medicare Supplement Plan with Rx will increase by 9%. There will be no change to deductible and pharmacy co-pays. The Dental Plan will see a 4% rate increase and the Vision plan remains unchanged. All churches and ministers covered under the UCC Benefits Plans should have received rate information. If you have questions, please contact the Conference office.

UCC Disabilities Ministries

UCC Disabilities Ministries was formed in 1978 and has worked for the full inclusion of all persons in the life of the church. The 2005 General Synod, held in Atlanta, [passed a resolution](#) entitled "Called to Wholeness in Christ: Becoming a Church Accessible to All." Churches are encouraged to become places accessible to all through the A2A program. Some of our Southeast Conference churches are working on being A2A. UCC Disabilities Ministries published an updated guide in August 2016. [Learn more..](#)

Still-Speaking Writer's Group for Advent

It is not too early to begin to prepare for Advent. The Still Speaking Writers Group has published an Advent devotional for 2016. There are also other resources to help you prepare individually and as a congregation to welcome the Christ Child into our hearts and our lives. [Learn more.](#)

Training, Retreat and Community Opportunities

Winter Youth Retreat 2017

Early Registration Deadline is November 4

When: January 13-16, 2017

Theme: What is your purpose?

Speaker: Rev. Scott Hardin-Nieri from Asheville, NC

We will welcome back Mandee and Christi from Alathea, and are shaking up the break-out sessions by asking students from Wake Forest Divinity School to create and facilitate them. Last, we will offer a few new service opportunities.

[Download the Retreat Flyer](#)

[Download the Retreat Registration Form](#)

[Winter Youth Retreat Website](#)

PATHWAYS Short-Term Explorer Courses

In the coming months, PATHWAYS is offering two Explorer Series Courses that are designed to provide a short term, low commitment online learning experience to inspire and enlighten those who love to learn. These courses will also acquaint inquirers with the PATHWAYS Theological Education program and introduce them to progressive Christian theology and praxis closely related to the best practices of the United Church of Christ. The asynchronous online learning platform enables participants to study, learn, and interact with peer learners on their own pace each week.

If you enjoy engaging in theological reflection and in group discussions, you are invited to partake in this special learning opportunity. All are welcome on first come, first served basis. Space is limited. Tuition is \$99 per course. Contact the PATHWAYS administrator at pathways@secucc.org at your earliest convenience to enroll. [Learn More.](#)

Planning for 2017 Retired Servants Retreat

The planning team for the retired servants retreat is all set with great Southeast representation:

- 2017 Coordinator: Rev. George & Martha Bennett, Valdosta GA, retired clergy & spouse
- Rev. Clara & Jim Benson, retired clergy & spouse
- Rev. Trish Greeves, retired clergy
- Rev. Cheryl Huff Slusser, retired clergy

Choose Peace 5K Run/Walk is Sat, Nov 5

Races for Peace invites you to their "Choose Peace 5K Run/Walk" on Saturday, Nov 5 in Atlanta. Races for Peace is a non-profit organization born out of the 2015 church massacre in Charleston. They are dedicated to promoting peace, building community, encouraging conflict resolution, and assisting victims of hate and violence by offering community race events, educational programs, and through our charitable giving. [Learn more and register on their website.](#)

Training and Counseling Center at St. Lukes

Every 3rd Tuesday of the Month, 11:30 - 1pm
Physical Address: 98 Currier St, Atlanta, GA 30308

Please join TACC staff and community experts for lunch, and to learn more about how to explore life's difficult conversations and challenging situations. Walk- Ins Welcome. RSVP's by EMAIL preferred by the Friday previous to the event

Suggested Donation: \$5 for attendance, \$15 for attendance and lunch

Nov 15: Post-Partum Depression

Understanding This Unique Condition and How To Help.
Please RSVP by Nov 11

<http://www.trainingandcounselingcenter.org/#live-learn-lunches/c10sm>